

## **The History of Leany's Store**

### **By Richard Van Wagoner**

The Leany family moved from Delta to Lehi in the spring of 1945 to purchase "Goodwin's Golden Rule," a J. C. Penny-like mercantile. When Leany's son Cleon, returned from World War II service, the two men established a partnership to operate the mercantile and the Utah Theatre which stood where the Lehi Drug Store (Pioneer Copy) is today.

Leany Mercantile was located in the 1901-built Ross Block which was destroyed by fire on May 1, 1994. Because this building was linked to the Leany family for nearly half-a-century, I will detail its history for you here.

In the fall of 1900, Lehi postmaster Will Ross and his mother Amanda, my great-grandmother, purchased this property from Henry Jocy. By Late December of that year excavation work was progressing. The limestone foundation was done by late June 1901, and by Christmas the building opened for business.

Will Ross moved the post office into the east portion of the building. T.J. Wadsworth then established his drugstore immediately west, while the third section of the structure, an additional door west, became the new facilities of Ross & Ross mercantile, comprised of proprietors Ed Ross and his father J. Edgar Ross, my great-grandfather. The second story consisting of office suites for the Lehi Commercial Club, and eventually the American Legion, was converted into apartments in 1949.

Since 1901, the west portion (86 West Main) was continuously occupied by six mercantiles: Ross & Ross, Lehi Cas Store, Watson Mercantile, Paltridge Mercantile, Goodwin's Golden Rule, and Leany's. From 1901 to 1949 the east cubicle (80 West Main) was the Lehi Post Office. The middle section (82 West Main) had seen the greatest variety of tenants including Wadsworth's Drug Store

(1901-06) and the State Bank of Lehi (1906-19). In the 1920s, it was converted into a dentist office for Dr. Harold Christensen. It was then successively occupied by two other dentists, Dr. J. G. Jones and Dr. Will Worlton. Sam Goodwin converted wuite into a ladies department in 1938. The in 1944 Alex Jameson established the Lehi Bakery there. When Jameson built his own bakery building at 35 West Main in 1946 (The Bridal Shop today), Leany's expanded into the area vacated by the bakery.

For a six-month period in 1952, Leany's became Allred's. Leslie Allred purchased the mercantile from Mayor Leany in January. The July 24, 1952 "Lehi Free Press" announced that Leany had repurchased it from Allred. Cleon Leany took over management of the store in late 1953 and built up a large appliance business (featuring Frigidaire) while managing the Utah Theater at night.

In January 1963 Cleon and Relva Leany purchased the Ross Block (which had been leased from the Hewitt Strong family) and initiated an extensive renovation and modernization project under the direction of Local contractor Alma Peterson. A new exterior on the south facing was built of white etruscan brick and blue and silver plate glass panels. The interior partition that had divided the two west compartments was removed, making one large, open salon. While the construction project was taking place, Leany's temporarily moved to 189 West Main, which had recently been vacated by Hutch's

Saturday, July 13, 1963, was the Grand Opening of Leany's new store. In addition to the appliance business (television, vacuums, sewing machines), Cleon and his wife Relva offered men's, women's and children's clothing and an extensive line of shoes. Dry goods were still offered as well as many other sundry items.

The mercantile world is a constantly changing, dynamic environment. merchant's must make adjustments to retain business. In the late 1970's, Cleon Leany went so far as to give his store new name by changing the spelling of his surname to Laney. He also discontinued his appliance, dry goods, and shoe

departments. Emphasis was then placed on electronic entertainment including stereos and televisions. Women's and young ladies' fashions expanded into the former men's wear and shoe departments. An extensive video cassette rental department featuring hundreds of movies, was later added, and in 1988 a drop-off station for dry-cleaning needs was offered by the store.

In mid-May 1989 Cleon and Relva Laney announced that after nearly forty-three years in business, they were going to retire, "relax and enjoy life to its fullest." Until July they regularly slashed prices until virtually all their clothing items were sold. The video and Nintendo business was sold to Tom and Clayton Kearly of Sandy who opened Fun Fever in the Laney building. The Kearly's business was not successful, however, and in October 1989, Cleon Laney reopened for business under the new name Laney's Circus Video which was ultimately managed by his son Gary.

At the time of the May 1 holocaust, the Leany building was being leased by Milton Maldonado who had established take One Video and Pizza on the premises. Future plans for the ravaged site have yet to be announced.